There was another official in this system of rural administration, the *pisar*, who, though only a salaried clerk, with no executive authority, frequently exerted great influence. He was usually a stranger to the commune because of his urban manners and dress. He might be a former divinity student, an army veteran, or a city clerk dismissed for inefficiency. He was ill paid as a commune clerk and inclined to make up for his low salary by accepting bribes.[8] But the real power in the village was often vested in the hands of the *uryadnik*, the village constable, who had manifold duties and many prerogatives. He tended to consider himself as Czar of the village and was inclined to be arbitrary and insolent. He often terrorized the peasants and "the government protected him in his practices, even to the point of prohibiting the newspapers from printing accounts of outrages he perpetrated."[9]

In the meantime other structural changes were taking place in the Russian village. Since earlier the landlords and now the government relied on a few peasants who controlled the mir, these often took advantage of their privileged position and tended to beguile the commune out of its best lands. Some of these people also owned taverns (*kabak*) and were money lenders and usurers. They tended to ape their masters, kept at a certain distance from other peasants and looked down upon them. Because of their greediness, misuse of power, and contemptuous attitude toward the peasants, they became known among the peasants as *miroedy* (mir-eaters) and as *kulaki* (fists).[10]

According to the established custom the decisions in the village assembly were arrived at unanimously and by acclamation. If there was a minority opinion the minority was expected to expressly or tacitly accept the view of the majority. In the Old-Slavonic village community and in the mir before serfdom a genuine unanimity rule was possible because that community was on the whole undifferentiated economically or socially, and was governed to a large extent by public consensus. But as soon as this rural community became stratified, the unanimity principle was exploited to the advantage of the dominant cliques. When serfdom was established, the unanimity principle was often employed to support the decisions and the whims of the landlords. And after emancipation, the police or an oligarchy of

[9 [i.e. after the abolition of serfdom -- Analyst]

624 621 565 623